POLICY DOCUMENTATION

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FCM

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne des municipalités

Task Force
On
Energy Conservation
Policy Statement

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Input: Regional Committee

FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES
POLICY STATEMENT
ON
ENERGY CONSERVATION

Although energy conservation is not as fashionable today as it was four years ago, energy-efficient municipal operations and an energy-efficient society should continue to be among Canada's priorities.

THE ISSUES

Direct energy costs, chiefly for transportation, heating buildings, and street lighting, constitute in the order of 5% of municipal expenditures. Indirect energy costs, as a component of general prices, extend the impact. Energy costs of all kinds are still rising faster than the inflation rate. They have the potential to rise at a much higher rate. International oil prices set the pace, and these are vulnerable to unpredictable politics and strife -- such as those, for example, that could close the Strait of Hormuz and prevent oil exports from the Persian Gulf states. A lean energy economy reduces the vulnerability. Squeezing every penny of value from municipal tax dollars is especially important in the face of today's provincial cut-backs. Energy conservation can help with the squeezing.

Because most of Canada's energy use takes place on roads under municipal jurisdiction, and in buildings subject to structural standards enforced by municipal officials, municipalities have the potential to impact powerfully on many aspects of energy use. Also electricity is the form of energy whose use is increasing most

rapidly. A large part of this energy is provided through municipal utilities. Garbage -- largely a municipal responsibility - seems increasingly attractive as a source of energy. (Britain began importing garbage from the Netherlands for this purpose in February!) Thus, Canada's muncipalities are in the energy use business whether they realize it or not.

More than many other matters of potential municipal interest, energy production and use is a federal government concern, although some provincial governments have shown a deep interest in energy conservation and, in particular, in the role of municipalities in achieving reduced energy use. Because energy conservation is, for the most part, an uncontroversial national priority, direct municipal-federal relationships in this area can be relatively uncomplicated. Hence, the FCM could, with proper consultation, provide a useful coordinating and stimulating role in this area at a national level.

Municipalities tend to have a natural bias in energy matters that deserves forceful expression. It is that energy imbalances can best be redressed by reducing consumption rather than by increasing supply. Municipalities are more likely to want to advocate federal grants to make buildings more efficient than grants to facilitate oil exploration because energy conservation grants create jobs in towns and cities, and they upgrade the urban fabric. The FCM can play an important national role in energy debates by making the municipalities' case for energy conservation.

THE OPTIONS

Consistent with the above, the FCM should give serious consideration to each of the following possibilities:

1. developing a national energy conservation information exchange for municipalities;
2. publishing a quarterly energy conservation newsletter;
3. assuming responsibility for the annual Cities Energy Conference;
4. developing a close relationship with federal ministries and agencies responsible for energy-related matters;
5. hiring a national municipal energy coordinator to carry out the above activities;
6. seeking a federal grant to pay for the coordinator and for the implementation of the above activities.

With respect to the above, at the 1984 Cities Energy Conference discussion took place and the following suggestions were made:

a) that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities manage an energy conservation newsletter and become a focal point for information exchange between municipalities across Canada.

b) that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities assist municipalities in the planning of future cities energy conferences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Accordingly, the Task Force on Energy Conservation recommends that the FCM:

1. should become a leader at the national level in the matter of municipal involvement in energy conservation;

2. indicate that it would assist with the management of future Cities Energy Conferences, and that, subject to securing appropriate funding, it would undertake to manage an energy conservation newsletter and become a focal point for information exchange between municipalities across Canada.